

## Dorchester Heights

*"Our forces march'd on upon Dorchester Neck,  
Made fortifications against an attack.  
The morning next following, as Howe did espy,  
The banks we cast up were so copious and high,  
Said he in three months, all my men with their might,  
Cou'd not make two such forts as they've made in a night."*

From a broadside entitled **ON THE EVACUATION OF BOSTON**  
by The British Troops, March 17, 1776.



One Revolutionary poet thus recounted the fortification of Dorchester Heights, which forced the British troops who had occupied Boston since 1768 to evacuate on March 17, 1776. The bloodless success was the first major victory for newly appointed Commander-in-Chief George Washington and a triumph which raised the morale of the embattled colonists.

Driving the British from Boston had required months of grueling work on the part of colonists in New York and Massachusetts Bay. In November, 1775, Washington had

dispatched Bostonian Henry Knox to retrieve badly needed cannon from Fort Ticonderoga, New York. Teamsters with eighty yoke of oxen made the three hundred mile journey bringing fifty-nine cannon for the colonial army then encircling Boston.

Once they neared the city, the rebels faced a new challenge. How would they roll the guns into place without tipping their hand to the British? On the night of March 4, 1776, colonial militia and local volunteers stealthily fortified the summit of Dorchester Heights. Wrapping their wagon wheels with straw to deaden the sound, they moved the cannon from Roxbury and entrenched them on the hills south of Boston. British General Howe planned an attack, but a violent storm prevented his soldiers from landing. Within a few days, Howe, his troops, and a thousand colonial Loyalists set sail for Nova Scotia, abandoning the city to Washington's forces and its jubilant citizens.

The army improved the fortifications and again stationed troops on Dorchester Heights during the War of 1812. After 1814, however, the twin hills declined in military importance. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the hills of South Boston underwent the same excavation that lowered Mount Vernon, Pemberton, and Beacon Hills, the "tri-mountains" of the Boston peninsula.



A survey of Boston Harbor circa 1711.



## DORCHESTER HEIGHTS TODAY



*A 1774 view of Boston and Beacon Hill as seen from Dorchester Heights.*

In 1898, the General Court of Massachusetts commissioned a monument to stand on the remaining hill of the Heights. Designed by the architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns, the white marble Georgian-Revival tower commemorates the 1776 victory. In 1951 the Secretary of the Interior designated Dorchester Heights as a National Historic Site. Twenty-seven years later the National Parks and Recreation Act authorized the city of Boston to transfer the site to the National Park Service. At that time, it joined the seven other sites which comprise Boston National Historical Park, established in 1974.

The historical significance of Dorchester Heights and the

development of the surrounding community vividly reflect the history and growth of the city of Boston. With the fortification of its summit in 1776, Dorchester Heights contributed significantly to one of Boston's major victories and demonstrated the integral connection between the Boston peninsula and her neighboring community.

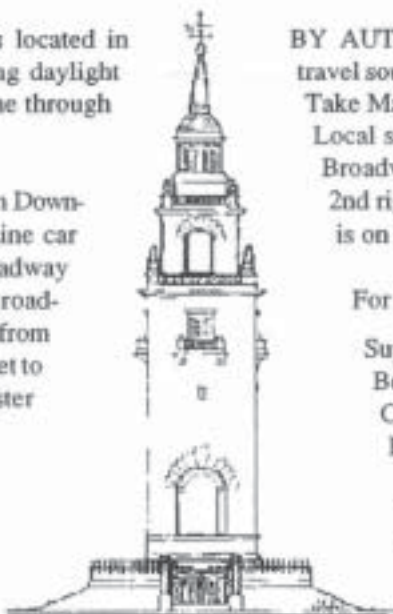
The annexation of Dorchester Neck to Boston in 1804 strengthened that link. Building and landfilling operations cemented the tie by facilitating travel between the two areas. Today, as part of Boston National Historical Park, Dorchester Heights offers a broad perspective to the city of Boston, past and present.

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## REACHING THE HEIGHTS

The Dorchester Heights Monument is located in Thomas Park. The park is open during daylight hours. The monument is open mid-June through August on a limited schedule.

**BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION:** From Downtown Boston, take an outbound Red Line car (either Ashmont or Braintree) to Broadway Station. Take a City Point bus from Broadway to G Street. It is a short walk south from the intersection of Broadway and G Street to Thomas Park, which surrounds Dorchester Heights.



**BY AUTOMOBILE:** From downtown Boston, travel south on Route 93 (Southeast Expressway). Take Mass Pike exit. Once off ramp, bear left at Local sign. Take a left at 1st set of lights onto Broadway. Take 1st right onto G Street and the 2nd right to Thomas Park. Dorchester Heights is on the left after South Boston High School.

For more information, please write:

Superintendent  
Boston National Historical Park  
Charlestown Navy Yard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02129

or call:

(617) 242-5642